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SARAH RAE:

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE MURRAY,

OF TROQUHAIN, J.P.,

MINISTER OF BALMACLELLAN.

GREENOCK:

J. FLOCKHART, 8 WEST BLACKHALL STREET.

1882.

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LOAN STACK

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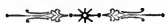
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The Author.



THE following, which forms part of an appreciative notice in Edwards' "Modern Scottish Poets" (fourth series), may suffice:—"Prominent on the roll of the bards of Galloway must be placed the name of the Rev. George Murray of Troquhain, late minister of Balmaclellan, New Galloway. Born in the latter burgh in 1812, he sprang from a family which had already shown signs of talent—the father being noted in the district for great force of character and ready wit, and two uncles being founders of one of the earliest cotton-spinning firms in Manchester, that of Messrs. Adam & George Murray. The father of the three was a Moffat man, descended, on the maternal side, from the Welshes of Corehead, and thus tracing kindred with the Reformer Knox.

"Our poet was educated at the parish school of his native burgh, and passed thence to Edinburgh University. During the first session, he gained an essay prize in the Humanity Class, and this brought him under the notice of Professor Pillans, who got him appointed to a tutorship in Ross-shire. Here he became acquainted with

Hugh Miller, and acquired a passion for the study of botany, which was to him a source of life-long pleasure. Later on he gained a prize also in the class of Professor Wilson, and when the great 'Christopher' paid a visit to Galloway, the old student became his host and guide. Soon after license as a preacher of the Gospel, he received an appointment as assistant and successor to the Rev. Gavin Cullen, minister of Balmaclellan—the presentation being from the Crown, and the first granted by Queen Victoria. The 'ten years' conflict' was then raging, and in this the young minister followed steadfastly the 'Constitutional' party, and adhered to the Establishment. After the Disruption, he was transferred to the parish of Girthon, in the same county, and there laboured with marked success for eight years. Thereafter, by a strange coincidence, he was again called to Balmaclellan—on this occasion as full minister, in succession to the Rev. William Wilson. There in his much-loved native Glenkens, he continued a faithful pastor until death—April 22, 1881, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, and forty-fourth of his ministry. Brimful of life and energy, he was not a man whose influence could be confined simply to his own parish, and having a marked business talent, and being prompt and thorough in everything he took in hand; he, in ecclesiastical, county, and local matters, held important offices—being Clerk, for instance, of both Presbytery and Synod.

“To an active mind he added the widest sympathies, taking an intelligent and enthusiastic interest in everything and everybody that came in his way. Of his love

of botany we have spoken. Hardly a hill or glen exists in Galloway which he did not explore. At prosaic agriculture he was an adept—his glebe being under model management, and his entailed estate splendidly developed. As an antiquary, he was most zealous, and earned the honour of “Corresponding Member” of the Edinburgh Society, being more intimate than any other in his day with the legends, manners, and curious nooks and characters of Upper Galloway.

“One of such varied gifts and information was an object of interest on all occasions. His public speeches were full of individuality, acuteness, and much of the characteristic humour of the Scot. In private life, and in the seclusion of his hospitable manse (where his originality and ideas of beauty were materially reflected), his conversation and geniality were charming—a large fund of anecdote being always at command, and his lively wit often breaking out in playful squibs of verse. His devotion to the muses came out in his sermons, which were often aglow with poetic fervour, abounding in allusions to nature, and to the romantic side of Old Testament story.” *

* It may be mentioned, by way of reference, that independent and more or less lengthy obituary-notices will be found in the relative columns of the *Scotsman*, *Courant*, *Kirkcudbrightshire Advertiser*, *Wigtownshire Free Press*, *Galloway Gazette*, and *Church of Scotland Missionary Record*.



PART I.

Sarah Rae: A Link of the Past.



The subject of this poem was a weak-minded woman on the roll of poor in the author's parish. Thomas Aird, the poet, thus wrote of it:—"In spirit it is patriotic, thoughtful, and tender; and the manly pith and simplicity of the expression are quite charming."



IN cities large, 'mid hum and whirl,
They twist the silken line,
And threads of cotton, flax, and wool,
A thousand spindles twine.

And there behold the wondrous loom
Weave well the fairy thread,
Yield raiment fit to all the world,
And give to Labour bread.

All honour to the scheming head,
God speed the willing hand,
That make our country what she is,
A rich and happy land!

The Scottish matron seldom now
Brings out the thrifty wheel:
No wool to comb, no fleece to row,
No hanks of yarn to reel.

And yet those days were days of worth,
When such sights could be seen
As maids and mothers bleaching webs
Of "sna-w-white" on the green,—

When in the cheerful winter nights
The "rowans" long they span,
For cloth for "wear" for wife and child,
And plaids for the "gudeman."

In yonder cottage, by the stream
That wanders through the moor,
Lives Sarah Rae : ah ! weak of mind,
Most feeble, old, and poor.

When yet a child her mother saw
(What does not mother see?)
That heaven had sent that feeble one
To hang about her knee.

Old songs she sang to that weak one.
They sang and span together:
This on her wheel, that on a stick—
The daughter and the mother.

"Distaffs," she said, "were things of eld,
More ancient than the wheel ;
And ladies grand in lordly ha'
Could twirl the spindle weel."

'Twas but a toy—a thing to please
And teach the lassie thrift.
The art to spin, the joy to sing,
Was that fond mother's gift.

And now for threescore years and ten,
On dark and sunny day,
With a potato and a stick,
Poor Sarah spins away.

She spins and croons in wondrous way,
Draws out the canny thread,
Winds countless clues, knits mittens braw,
And hose for times of need.

To me it is a thing most strange,
When old things glide away,
That none the present to the past
Can link, like Sarah Rae.

One of God's creatures, old and weak,
Alone the thread can twine
As did our mothers in the days
And evenings of langsyne.

Let none deride ! The dress home-spun
Was firmer far than fine ;
And maidens fair and manly breasts
Were clad in it langsyne.

The proudest dames in Scotland wide
Taught, in the days of yore,
Their daughters to prepare such robes
As Bruce and Wallace wore.

And need we tell what lovers true
Have worn the Lowland plaid,
And wrapt its folds with tender care
Around the Lowland maid ?

Customs may die, but music lives !
Songs of the rock and loom
Will please, console, and flourish fresh
Until the day of doom.

O, "Tarry Woo is ill to Spin,"
And "Jenny dang the Weaver,"
Are airs to please while waters flow,
And foam is on the river.

While Scotsmen live, down manly cheeks
The pearlins oft will row
At songs like these—"The Cairdin' o't,"
And "Weary Pund of Tow."

My lay is o'er. The present age
Matured the art of spinning.
Poor Sarah lingers at the source,
And knows but the beginning.

Yet to begin—to twist one thread
Was an invention clever.
Who first did so? The chain here breaks :
That link is lost for ever.





Youth and Age.



A HARDY boy, I leaped or ran,
Or climbed in sport the linden tree,
My shinny plied, my peerie span ;
Where are the boys who played with me ?

We swam the stream, the pike we slew,
Or fished for pearls in distant Dee,
For nuts we ranged Knocknarling glen ;
Where are the lads who roved with me ?

I climbed each hill that frowns on Ken,
Could name each plant that decks the lea,
At school still strove to lead the van ;
Where are the youths who strove with me ?

My brothers where ? In foreign lands,
Far, far from home and Ashburn Tree ;
In graves apart, south, east, and west,
Sound sleep the Five who slept with me !

Where are my sons ? In cities large,
Or sailing o'er some stormy sea,
Or treasured deep in Kells Churchyard ;
There are the boys who sprang from me.

Yet I'm contented, cheerful still,
A hale old man nigh sixty-three !
Age, grief, or change may shade the path,
The chequered joy abides with me.



Our Captain.



These lines were composed on the death, in the prime of life, of
Wellwood Maxwell, Esq., of Glenlee, Captain of the 3rd
K.R.V., to whom the poet was Chaplain.



OUR Captain sleeps !
What is it that keeps
Our Chief from the field away ?
Each Volunteer
In the ranks is here :
What aileth Glenlee to day ?

Our Captain sleeps !
Death comes and reaps
The green and the stately corn :
To his lonely grave
The young and the brave
Is slowly and sadly borne.

Our Captain sleeps !
And his widow weeps
For the gift gone to the Giver :
Each Volunteer
Sheds the bitter tear
That his Chief has gone for ever.

For ever ? Not so ;
The trump shall blow,
Arousing the good and true ;
And the Chief and his men
Shall meet again
At the last—the grand Review.



Helen: The Welsh Harper.



The following poem was founded on facts which may be found recorded in the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*, April 23 and 30, 1816. A version of them was communicated by Train, the Gallovidian antiquary, to Sir Walter Scott, in view of a new edition of "Redgauntlet."



A GENTLE maid was Helen Hughes,
Few fairer might be seen ;
Kind was her heart, no lighter foot
Tripp'd o'er the village green.

She dwelt amid the hills of Wales,
Hills lonely, grand, and wild,
Old was her father's race ; she was
His loved and only child.

When Helen touched her harp and sang
Lays of the mountain land,
There was a spell in Helen's voice,
And power in Helen's hand.

The curate blindly loved his child,
And dreamt, in foolish pride,
His Helen would one day become
Llewellyn's blooming bride.

She loved. Ah me ! her love was no
Proud chieftain of the land—
A yeoman's son has wooed and won
Sweet Helen's snowy hand.

Then friends were wroth, and frowned as chill
As dark December morn ;
The flow'ret fair is cast away
With frantic rage and scorn.

Her lover seeks the tented field,
Far o'er the sea he sails ;
Sever'd for aye is Helen Hughes
From home, from friends, from Wales !

How long he fought in Egypt land,
And served his country well ;
How he was loved by Helen Hughes,
We wait not here to tell.

At last her soldier quits the field,
Sore wounded in the fight,
And dim and blind are Helen's eyes,
That once were blue and bright.

They coast along yon tideless sea,
By Nile's empurpled shore,
To where the Atlantic heaves its wave,
Then straight for Erin bore.

There long they lived. If poor their lot
They had the thrifty hand ;
Neat hose they sold, and baskets trim
Made of the willow wand.

A pension bravely won, with toil,
Their humble wants supplied,
But yet for dark and low'ring days
Small comfort could provide.

The hunted hare in circles wide
Its hot pursuer flies ;
If long the chase, it still returns
To its dear form, and dies.

So, thoughts of Wales live on, where'er
The weak and blind may roam ;
The long and weary march begins—
The Wand'ers make for home.

Their eldest was in girlhood's bloom,
Three boys had next been given,
A babe caressed was at the breast—
In all they number Seven.

In wicker-cart a patient ass
Dragged on their humble store ;
It bore the harp that Helen loved,
And played in days of yore.

This ass was like its brotherhood—
A patient, hardy thing,
That loved the thistle by the way,
And lingered at the spring.

In hamlet, town, or lonely cot,
The harp was still their stay ;
It was a friend, and gained them friends,
And cheered the weary way.

From cabins, doors, and windows high,
Brown pence were freely thrown,
And words of cheer, and kindly looks,
Still helped the Wand'ers on.

Green Erin thus they journeyed o'er,
When summer days were long ;
Yet ere they crossed for Scotland's shore,
They heard the reaper's song.

And Autumn waned before they reached
The silver Luce and Cree ;
Winter blew shrill when Helen heard
Fleet racing to the sea.

And now they cross the Twynholm moor ;
The boys march well before,
The rest come on—the patient ass
Still drags their humble store.

And, joy of joys, the fair-haired boys
Look o'er the Solway sea ;
They gaze on far and sun-lit lands,
Hills grand and blue they see.

“ Is that, dear father, that our home ?
Are these the hills of Wales,
Of which our mother sweetly sings,
And you tell wond'rous tales ? ”

“Yon hills, my boys, are English hills,
Not far from them is Wales ;
From them you see our own dear land,
With all its peaceful vales.”

Helen saw not the glittering shore,
The blue and distant hill,
But in her youth she Snowdon knew,
In heart she loved it still,

And when her boys thus talked of home,
And all for joy were wild,
She wept, yet in her heart was glad ;
Again she was a child,

A happy child, when life was young,
When friends were kind and true,
When she was joyful all day long,
Nor cold nor hunger knew.

But moaning sounds now fill the air,
Clouds gather in the west,
In frowning grandeur rise and sweep
O'er Cairnsmore's haughty crest.

A fearful storm sets in, which well
The boldest might affright ;
Ah me ! where will the Wand'ers lodge
This wild and wintry night ?

They to a house within a glen,
By gleams of light are led,
In God's name vainly ask a roof
To hide the stranger's head.

Once more they knock, and now the harp
Pours forth a feebler strain ;
Again the Wand'ers are repulsed—
They twice have knocked in vain.

With sadden'd heart and trembling limb,
Homeward still bend the Seven ;
The rain falls fast, the lightnings flash
Athwart the darken'd heaven.

A gravel-pit was nigh the way,
Which, struggling on, they found ;
Deep was the pit, arched out below,
And insecure around.

They nestled down, poor grateful souls,
Within that sheltered pit,
And willing hands, with labour great,
Have there a camp-fire lit.

Their meal is o'er, their prayers are said,
The embers glow less bright,
The babe caressed is at the breast,
Their last words are—"Good night."

And now the weary Wand'rers sleep,
They dream, perchance, of heaven ;
The earth gives way, the pit is closed,
Deep buried are the Seven.

The fair-haired boys will never cross
The wide and winding Dee,
The maiden may not reach that home
Far o'er the Solway sea.

The soldier sleeps—his march is o'er ;
God called them all to rest ;
Her harp on high let Helen string !
Her babe is with the blest !

When Sabbath dawned, the storm was hushed ;
One living lonely thing
Had plucked the herbage by the way,
Then stood beside a spring.

Their living tomb may still be seen
By Tarff's wild-wooded vale ;
The house still stands where hearts of stone
Heard Helen's dying wail.

The Upland Vale.



This poem is descriptive of the upper valley of the Urr, one of the rivers of Galloway. About the time of its composition the district (Corsock) was disjoined as a parish *quoad sacra*; and in this movement the author took a great interest and a leading part.



I.

URR'S upland vale of old was bare !
No village trim, no mansion fair
Gleamed in the sun : no copsewood green
Its mantle spread to clothe the scene.
In spring the wanderer on the hill
Might hear the curlew whistle shrill,
In summer's prime and autumn's weather,
Enjoy the sunshine and the heather,
See hardy goats and harmless sheep
Browse on the moor and mountain steep,
But when cold winter darkly lowered,
And its fierce torrents madly showered
On the lone wild, O then, I ween,
It was a bleak and joyless scene.

II.

Look yet again. How bright the scene !
Here Wealth, and Art, and Taste have been,
With wizard hand and magic spell,
To work vast change, and work it well.
Broad pathways stretch o'er vale and hill,
Fair bridges span the foaming rill,
Fenced are the fields, and drained, and now
The ploughman holds the steady plough,
And showers and sunshine bless the soil
That well rewards the peasant's toil.
On every hand are beauteous trees,
To glad the scene and calm the breeze ;
Now they swing freely to the blast,
Now far a grateful shadow cast,

Here, nestle sweetly by the stream,
There, on the far hill-side they gleam :
Like serried spears in ranks they rise,
And seem to prop the azure skies.

III.

A Poet's blessing on the hand
That decks with woods dear Scotia's land !
Surely through sunshine and through storms
Trees silent rear their graceful forms,
Lend to the linn a grander look,
Half show, yet screen, the brawling brook,
Bid vale, and hill, and mountain-side,
Wave in the wind their leafy pride ;
And hark ! yon songsters of the grove
Pour forth their lay of tender love,
Carol full blythely all the day
Till eve bedews their home of spray,
Then rest contented till the light
Awakes the morn to fresh delight.

IV.

Crogo's old Tower has mouldered long.
In its dark hall is heard no song
Of Lowland maid or minstrel grey ;
Only at night, when ebbs the day,
Under the pale moon's silver beam
Is heard the owlet's mournful scream.
'Twere sad to muse by castle old,
On names long dead, or hearths long cold,
Did not the eye, where'er we roam,
Behold some sweet, some fairer home,
See hamlet trim, and peasant's cot,
And homestead gay grace many a spot,
And high o'er all see Corsock Towers,
Shaded mid pine and birchen bowers,
Like some tall chieftain, stern and high,
Of lordly form and eagle eye,
Look proudly forth o'er dale and down,
O'er valleys green and hills of brown.

V.

Oh solemn hour ! Oh solemn day
That brings the flock in long array !
From Loch of Lowes, where lilies smile
Around thy darkly-wooded Isle,
From Westlandhill, from Auchenhay—
From North, from South, they wend their way.
And mark him well, the gifted heir *
Of ancient line, from sweet Glenlair !
As did their sires, so seek they God,
'Tread the same paths their fathers trod ;
For oh, to them that church is dear
That bravely foiled the cruel spear,
When martyrs' blood was freely given
For Truth, for Conscience, and for Heaven.

VI.

And gaze we now where Urr's dark tide
Low murm'ring flows to Kirtlebryde.
Oh pious hands have reared with care,
Mid fears and hopes, yon House of Prayer :
Meekly it stands beside the shore ;
Here, when the days of toil are o'er,
And Sabbath bell wakes blessed morn,
Upon the breeze the psalm is borne,
Upon the ear falls holy prayer,
Upon the heart with tender care
To age, to manhood, and to youth,
The Pastor breathes the words of Truth.

VII.

Hard by those altars you may see
The modest manse. Oh still in thee
May men of God find peaceful home,
Long as the Urr is streaked with foam,
Enjoy the gifts that He hath given
And point the path that leads to heaven.

* The late Professor Clerk-Maxwell, of Cambridge University, who was wont to act as a Ruling Elder in the parish church.

While high and holy aims engage
 The faithful friend and teacher sage,
 May joys domestic bless the hour
 That brings some fair one to this bower ;
 When springs the floweret at his feet
 May childhood's eye that floweret greet ;
 When willing hands the meal prepare
 May Friendship still have welcome share ;
 When aching hearts their griefs disclose
 Still seek those sorrows to compose ;
 With Faith, and Hope, and Christian Love,
 To other creeds indulgent prove ;
 Still seeking through life's chequered day
 To speed an honest, truthful way.

VIII.

When comes the hour, as come it must,
 That dust returns to kindred dust,
 The flock, uncovered, to his bier
 Shall pay the tribute of a tear,
 And truly tell,—“ Beneath this sod
 There rests in peace, A Man of God.”



The Bridge.



This ballad was printed in 1866 in connection with a Bazaar, and dedicated “to the ladies of the Stewartry, who, with kind hearts and willing hands, largely promoted the building of a bridge over the Dee at Kirkcudbright.”



WHERE Merrick rears its lofty crest,
 Dark massive hills among,
 Four brother streams* spring into life,
 Four streams renowned in song.

* The Dee, the Doon, the Minnoch, and the Stinchar.

From mountain rill, from lonely loch,
From dark and rocky glen,
Dee gathers force, then echoing pours
Its torrents to the Ken.

And foaming Deuch and winding Ken
Speed onward to the Dee :
Then Dee, dark-rolling, pours its floods
In grandeur to the sea.

The Cree is grand, the Tarff is sweet,
And Doon flows fair and free ;
But Tarff and Cree and " bonny Doon "
Must yield the palm to Dee.

Upon its banks the birch-tree waves
Its long " dishevelled hair ;"
The purple heath, the yellow broom,
And milkwhite thorn are there.

Past hoary Threave it sweeps with pride,
O'er linns goes thund'ring down,
Then winding wide, with stately stride,
Greets old St. Cuthbert's Town.

There twice each day the tide ebbs out
Unto the sounding sea,
And twice each day the tide returns
In floods to rouse the Dee.

Oh 'tis a thing of fear at times
That stormy stream to cross !
Sad tales are told of wat'ry graves,
Ah ! tales of saddest loss.

The boatman plies his busy task,
The boat creaks on its chain,
See how it rocks upon the wave
'Mid angry wind and rain !

Heard ye that cry of fear ? that scream
Ring through St. Cuthbert Town ?
A man and horse are in the stream—
Oh God, they drown, they drown !

With folded arms and placid mien
Here died a Christian sage ; *
The strong † might struggle with the stream,
Not so the man of age.

Oft on its banks have women wailed ;
Oft orphans here have wept
For those who, sinking in its wave,
The sleep of death have slept.

A sailor bold lived nigh the Fleet
Some eighty years and three ;
His manly words, from youth to age,
Were "bridge the fatal Dee."

But Ardwall's ‡ pen and orphan's tear
Still told their tale in vain ;
The boatman plies his busy task,
The boat creaks on its chain.

But now St. Cuthbert's men and fair
Have vowed a vow this day :
A bridge we need—a bridge we'll have—
A bridge cost what it may.

Then found it well, raise high the pier,
Span the proud river o'er,
Build up the ledge, the pathway form,
Stretch it from shore to shore.

St. Cuthbert's youth at morn and eve
To Twynholm hills shall go ;
In spring to pull the primrose pale,
In autumn pluck the sloe :

Prolong their walk, in musing mood,
Till summer days are o'er,
In distance see the Isle of Ross,
And Senwick's wooded shore.

* William Ireland, Esq., of Barbey, Steward-Substitute, who thus perished in 1845.

† The Rev. John Underwood, minister of Kirkcudbright, who swam ashore on the same occasion.

‡ Mr. M'Culloch, of Ardwall, who long advocated the erection of a bridge.

And maids from Borgue and Twynholm hills
Eastward their steps shall turn,
See Cuthbert's Town, Galroonie's brae,
And Buckland's bonny burn.

The hardy tillers of the soil
Shall safely cross the stream,
And Castlesod,* its joys and griefs,
Shall vanish like a dream !

And flocks and herds, in pleasant fields
That now securely rove,
At trysting times shall throng the bridge
In many a goodly drove.

And wealth shall come in many a form
To old St. Cuthbert's Town ;
Its hum will cheer M'Lellan's toil,
And Cavan's labour crown.†

The old boat from its chain must part,
And drift, like time, away ;
The chain shall sink, to rise no more,
On this auspicious day.

Long as the tide ebbs out to sea,
Long as it flows to land,
Long as a leaf floats on the Dee,
Still may the good bridge stand.

Around it poppling waves shall splash,
Near it tall ships shall float,
And through its arch the swift ‡ shall rush,
Screaming its wildest note,

Then, circling high, delighted look
On mountain, stream, and sea,
St. Mary's Isle, its woods, and all
The grandeur of the Dee.

* The Ferry Inn.

† The Town Clerk and Provost of Kirkcudbright, respectively,
who were active in promoting the building of the bridge.

‡ A favourite bird with the poet.



The Hills of Galloway.



The point of view here supposed is the "Market-hill," Castle-Douglas.



FAR to the north is Cairnsmore green,
The grand hill of Carsphairn ;
See to the west proud Merrick's crest,
Yonder is Carlin's Cairn.

The Rhins of Kells, Cairnsmore of Fleet,
Cairnharrow and Bengray,
Are warders bold on the western ridge
Of rock-bound Galloway.

Eastward old Criffel has his home
Hard by the Solway Sea ;
There Screeel, Bentudor, and Bengairn
Stretch from the Urr to Dee.

These are the hills, the grand old hills,
Scarr'd by the hand of Time,
Upon whose crest the dark clouds rest,
Where thunder rolls sublime.

Ever, ye streams, leap down those hills !
Sweep on, dark-rolling Dee ;
Ever, ye vales, be robed in green,
Ye birds, give melody !

This is the cradle of Southland men,
Scholars and sons of song ;
The holy brave here found a grave,
Here battled with the strong !



Lament of Wallace for Sir John the Graeme.

~~~~~  
The following lines, of date 1861, were suggested by the theme of  
a school exercise.  
~~~~~

OF all that faced yon southron host,
In Freedom's battle bravely lost,
And found a death of fame,
Thou wert the bravest of the brave
That ever filled a hero's grave,
My good, my gallant Graeme!

When stern Oppression's tempest lower'd,
And woes on Scotland thickly shower'd,
Thou still wert true to me ;
One mighty thought thy breast possess'd,
That here no tyrant's foot should rest,
That Scotland should be free !

For her thy love was strong, and pure
As silver streamlet leaping sure
From rock to linn beneath ;
The thoughts that filled thy manly mind
Were all for her, and free as wind
That stirs the mountain heath.

By night, by day, through years of toil,
Together we have trod the soil
Of this poor bleeding land ;
Battling, like brothers, for the right
'Gainst all the pride of Edward's might,
And his accursed band.

Let Scotia's daughters at thy tomb
Bewail, like me, thy patriot doom,
Here shed the frequent tear ;
Enraptured hang upon thy name,
Tell to all time that John the Graeme,
A hero, resteth here.

For me, perchance, no spot of earth
In the loved land that gave me birth
Shall be a resting-place ;
My scattered dust in distant lands,
May be the sport of brutal hands,
And vanish into space.

But like the nursling plants of heaven
For whom the light and dews are given,
That dust as seed shall be ;
And give the name of Wallace power,
In danger's darkest, deadliest hour,
To bid a land be free.



Lochinvar : An Angler's Song.



SOME lure the pike in dark Loch Urr,
Some grayling seek in Daer,
Some salmon find in silver Ken,
But give me Lochinvar ;
Launch, boatman, launch the "Mary-Anne,"
Rest now the dripping oar,
The westland winds the waters curl,
White nymphs* are on the shore.

* White breakers, like the "Finnart Maids."

Let Criffel boast of Kindar's Lake,
Hard by the Solway sea,
Lone Lochinvar, 'mid lofty hills,
Is dearer far to me ;
When purple heath and brackens green
Adorn the mountain side,
Then let me drift past Helen's Isle,
And rock upon thy tide.

Let Duchray sheep browse on the hill,
The swan float on its way,
Let moor-cocks claver to their mates,
And plovers pipe their lay ;
But, boatman, blythely guide thy bark
To each enticing bay,
And let me ply the gentle art
From morn till close of day.

Where specks of foam bedeck the wave,
There let "the fancy"† sweep,
There let the woodcock's mottled wing
Rouse fishes from the deep !
The pliant rod now bends in air,
The line reels gaily out,
Now, boatman, now, with ready arm
Land safe the yellow trout.

I loved thee when my locks were brown,
I love thee still when old,
I love thee for thy waters blue,
And for thy chieftain bold,
Who swam the Esk, on steed the best,
Nor stopp'd for stone or scaur,
To win the bride from whom there sprang
The Lords of Lochinvar.

† The author's favourite hook—woodcock wing, red hackle, and yellow body, with green banner at the bend of a small hook.



The Broom and Channelstane.



WITH hound and horn o'er mountain wild
Let huntsmen sportive stray,
By winding stream and lonely loch
Let fishers pass the day ;
But dearer far, when skies are blue,
Is yon brave icy plain,
Where curlers meet to ply the broom,
And swing the "channelstane !"

High in the lift the laverock loves
To greet the rosy morn,
And sweet the mavis pours its lay
From out the scented thorn ;
But sweeter far than song of bird,
Or lady's melting strain,
The music that the curler loves—
The booming "channelstane."

Oh green's the isle within the wave
Whereon the shamrock grows ;
Bright are the lands that proudly boast
The lily and the rose ;
But dearer far that rugged land
Far in the northern main,
That claims the thistle and the heath,
The broom and "channelstane."



The Ken.

—:—
This was a youthful effusion, and is but a fragment.
—:—

PAINT now, my muse, the mountain land
Where Ken's broad stream, resistless, grand,
Its course pursues in stately pride,
Till lost in Dee's dark rushing tide.
A fairer or a nobler river
By poet's pen was painted never ;
Thy name, sweet Ken, as scholars say,
Proclaims thee "chief" in Galloway !
Where melt the snows on Lorg's dark hill,
The Ken first pours its infant rill.
Though lone the scene and wild the way,
Here Nature's child might ever stray ;
Now cross the valley broad and deep,
Now climb the green and grassy steep,
Now gaze with fond enraptur'd eye
From hills sublime that kiss the sky ;
Now follow with poetic dream
The windings of the mountain stream.
See how it sweeps Lorg's rocky sides,
And gathers greatness as it glides,
Nursed by the clouds that frequent rest
On Cairnsmore's high and haughty crest.
Onward it rolls past lone Altry,
And many a tow'ring hill thereby,
Now winding through the moory mead,
Now rushing o'er the pebbled bed,
Now 'gainst some rock's projecting head
Hurling its waves with furious force,
Till foam and spray in its wild course

In misty wreaths are upward driven,
To mingle with the cloud of heaven.

Such is thy course, sweet river Ken,
'Mid lofty hill and lonely glen !

Those echoes that for ages flung
The accents of thy mountain tongue

On other ears, here still prolong

The music of thy varied song.

Still may we hear among the hills

The music of the tinkling rills,

Still hear the hoarse wind wildly rave

To wake the murmur of the wave ;

Still pause entranced beside the linn,

And listen to its roaring din.

'Tis Nature's music ! Tame the soul

That never felt its sweet control !

The bird may warble on the tree,

And fill the grove with melody ;

The human voice with melting strain

The raptur'd spirit can enchain ;

But ah ! the songster of the grove

Soon drops his lay of tender love,

The notes divine of lady gay

Charm for an hour, then pass away ;

But Nature's never-ending lay

Brooks, rivers, oceans still convey,

Still breathing with the tide of time

Sounds soothing, solemn, and sublime.

Ken's waters, now embossed with foam,

Sweep sweetly past low-spreading Holm,

Winding and wimpling all the way

From lone Strathhannah and Corlae.

When the grey mist creeps up the hill,

Here let the angler prove his skill ;

For where yon waving willows weep

Lies many a tenant of the deep.

At summer eve, ere yet to rest

The orb of day sinks in the west,

The yellow trout in sportive play

Glance back the sunbeam's parting ray,

Till all the pool one blended blaze
Of speckled beauty there displays,
And circling eddies roll their wave
O'er many a may-fly's early grave.
Morn saw yon insect proudly dare
To skim the fields of upper air ;
Joyous of life, it onward flew,
Now scann'd the cloud, now sipp'd the dew,
Still wand'ring wide on tiny wing
To every flow'ret's scented spring.
Ah luckless wight, why wend thy way
To where yon hawthorn, old and grey,
Flings o'er the stream its ample form,
Unscathed by fire or wintry storm ?
That sullen plunge beside the shore
Has closed thy course for evermore.
So perishes youth's brightest dream,
Like insect on the mountain stream !

 Devolving from that upland plain,
Broad, deep, and rapid is the Ken.
Then, traveller, haste—on, onward speed,
And rouse the mettle of thy steed,
If in the long and rapid race
The stream and thou keep equal pace.
Past many a hill of giant form
Whose mantle is the cloud and storm,
Through many a glen, dark, lone, and deep,
Whose ivied banks are stern and steep,
Reckless it rolls with headlong stride
To where Muirdrockwood looks in pride
Far to the south, o'er dale and down,
O'er valleys green and hills of brown.
 And lo, as in the month of May,
 A bridal band so blythe and gay
 Speed to the dance with nimble feet ;
 So does the Deugh with pleasant sound
 Leap to the Ken, and with a bound
 These brothers of the mountain meet.
Impetuous stream ! Fierce child of hills,
Deep-furrow'd by a thousand rills,

For thee we leave Ken's mightier floods,
Glenhowl's deep heughs, Erndarroch woods.
And paint upon our humble page
Thy rise, thy progress, and thy rage
Of linns and cataracts, whose roar
Wakes the bold echoes of thy shore—
Echoes that loud, from steep to steep,
Proclaim the thunder of thy deep.

A prospect fair may well be seen
From the far top of Cairnsmore green ;
And though the coast around be wild,
This is the home for wayward child
Of nature, who would love to dwell
By Druid ring and Fairy well,
Or muse on cairns of warriors slain
And left upon the embattled plain.
Haply thy step may seek the grave
Where sleeps the wand'rer by the wave
Of Doon. Or view that castle's wall,
Its rampart, gate, and spacious hall,
Where mirth has glowed and arms have rung,
And maidens danced and minstrels sung ;
Ascend its turrets, grey with time,
Those mountains view that raise sublime
Their mighty heads, that heaven may rest
Its clouds upon their rocky breast.

Such scenes as these affect me more
Than famed Italia's verdant shore,
Where fields of vine adorn the vale
And flowers perfume the scented gale !
To me more dear is sweet Lagwyne :
May bliss attend that stream of thine,
May wealth and peace still here abound,
And happy homes be ever found,
Still o'er thy mountains stern and steep,
In thousands roam thy flocks of sheep,
Still let yon hill of richest ore
For good Cathcart its treasures pour !
A martyr's hopes, a freeman's will,
A Briton's heart attend thee still,

Thy pastor's voice delight thee ever,
And woman's smile forsake thee never,
And may thy daughters always vie
In beauty and in modesty !

Yet e'er we leave dark-rolling Deugh,
Approach and view yon awful cleuch.*

Stern are the rocks on either side,
O'erhung with moss and lichens grey,
While far below the troubled tide
Pursues its wild and angry way.

It is in truth a scene sublime,
And fit for one of pensive mood,
Who loves to note the scars of time,
And commune with a raging flood.

In that wild spot, as shepherds tell,
A feat of daring thus befell.

A wand'rer wild, one sultry day,
Held o'er the moor his lonely way :
His locks of jet, his eyes of flame,
His swarthy cheek, and hardy frame,
His gipsy lineage proclaim.
At morn he trod fair Carrick shore,
At noon had climbed huge Merrick o'er,
And e'er the twilight wrapp'd the glen
Heard the far echoes of the Ken.
Scant food had he that live-long day
To cheer him on his rugged way ;
Not oft on bended knee would stoop
To bless the bright and sparkling brook,
And scarce deigned he at times to gather
Some wild fruit 'mid the mountain heather.
At close of day the wand'rer spied
Caermunna on the dark hill-side ;
He enters, sees the dame prepare
With ready hand the evening fare.

Not long viewed he the tempting prey ;
The matron rudely cast aside,
Then bore with ruthless hand away
The booty to the mountain side.

* The "Tinker's Leap," so called from the story that follows.

Just then with fierce and wild halloo
O'er moss and hill some shepherds flew,
To catch the game so fair in view.

Fleet be thy foot, young hunter, now
Strong be thy limb and stout thy breast,
Heed not the dew upon thy brow

But clear yon hill's opposing crest ;
That gained, the prize thou'lt surely win
Stayed by the Deugh's loud-roaring linn.
But on, and on, the plunderer hied,
Like vessel bounding in her pride ;
No bridge was nigh, the ford was deep,
The rocky banks were rough and steep ;
But with a bound, like wild gazelle
Roused from its lair by bugle swell
Of huntsman in the greenwood dell,
With cheek unblanch'd and footstep true
Across the yawning gulf he flew ;
Then sat him down right glad to find
A feast so highly to his mind.

The toilsome way and eager chase
Supplied the zest that hunger knows,
But mortal man ne'er ran such race,
Nor paid such price for Scotland's brose !

.

The wild-horse in his joy careers
Across the unmeasured plain,
And flecked with foam toils madly on
Some distant spot to gain :
So thunders Ken through sounding woods,
Majestic in his glee,
With mane snow-white, and strength untamed,
And gladsome liberty ;
Then raging through the Milton pass
With mingled foam and spray,
Pursues through broad and fertile plains
His wide and winding way.
In days of yore no arches fair

Spanned this proud river o'er ;
 A crazy boat across the stream
 Both kings and cadgers bore.
 See yonder steep and toilsome path
 That skirts the holy ground
 Where rest the sires of old Dalry,
 And nigh that ancient mound ;
 Adown that steep rode Margaret fair
 With Scotland's proudest dames,
 And there in manhood's prime has trod
 The bold and fiery James.
 Though well the merry dance led he,
 And loved the Muses Nine,
 He oft a pious pilgrim hied
 To famed St. Ninian's shrine.
 Long, long our matrons wailed for him
 Who sought the Southron strand,
 Our bards for him the cypress twined
 Who loved the minstrel land.
 Though round their King his nobles brave
 Held up their dinted shield,
 Foredoomed he fell, though well fought he
 On Flodden's fatal field.

.

Dalarran plain, where fell the Dane,
 Leave now for Garple Glen ;
 And as we roam, behold in Holm
 Another Hawthornden.
 'Mid rugged elms and silver firs
 How gay thy turrets gleam,
 While flaunts the broom and swings the oak
 Above the rushing stream.
 At eve 'mid rocks here lurks the fox
 Or sallies forth to prowl,
 The moon's pale beam scarce glints the crag
 Where hoots the boding owl.

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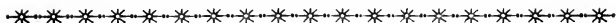
A Translation.



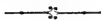
Thrown off by the author when reading Latin with his boys.



A CASK of whisky lay without
A village inn. There passed along
A woman old, with many a clout,
Who scented Islay smelling strong ;
And smacking which she roared or sung,
“ If this the pleasure of thy dregs,
What wert thou full—full to the bung
Of living stingo, King of Kegs ? ”



Another.



ONCE on a time the Sun would wed,
The frogs began to cry ;
Great Jove was deeply moved thereat,
And asked the reason why.
“ One Sun at present burns us up,
In ditch and pool and lake—
More *suns* will us annihilate,
If Sol a wife should take.”



PART II.

The Glens o' Gallowa'.



FAIR Scotland I hae wander'd wide,
And seen its hills and valleys a',
But Highland hill, nor Lowland vae,
Can match the Glens o' Gallowa'.

There silver Ken's majestic flood
Rows o'er the lofty waterfa',
Till echo wi' the rushing sound
Fills a' the Glens o' Gallowa'.

The tow'ring ash, the holly green,
The weeping birk, and rowan bra',
Wide wave their branches o'er the braes,
And deck the Glens o' Gallowa'.

On ilka bank fair flow'rets spring,
And bonnie birds in ilka shaw
The live-long day sing o' their loves,
And cheer the Glens o' Gallowa'.

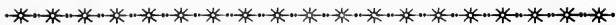
But Nature's flowers that bloom sae fair,
Nor birds that wile the hours awa',
Such pleasures give as lasses blythe,
Amang the Glens o' Gallowa'.

Their modest looks nae heart can stan',
 In peacefu' cot or lordly ha' ;
 They melt the soul to love's control,
 Amang the Glens o' Gallowa'.

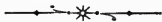
But oh, there's ane—I daurna name—
 In beauty that surpasses a',
 Wha stole my heart and robbed my peace,
 Amang the Glens o' Gallowa'.

Her hair sae jet wad mock the slae,
 Her heaving bosom shame the snaw,
 And then her e'e—sic ne'er was seen
 Amang the Glens o' Gallowa'.

Her form sae tall, sae fu' o' grace,
 The like I never, never saw ;
 Give me but her, I'll ne'er forsake
 The bonnie Glens o' Gallowa'.



The Birken Tree.



WHENE'ER the sun gangs o'er the hill,
 And shades of evening wrap the Glen,
 I'll seek the wood wi' right gude will
 Where Coom rows saftly to the Ken.
 The bonniest lass that e'er I saw
 Keeps true-love tryst this night wi' me,
 And we hae 'greed between us twa
 To meet beneath the birken tree.

I've lo'ed her lang, and ken her true—
 Right sure am I the gowden sun
 Will wander lang through heaven sae blue
 Nor shine upon a fairer one.
 Red on the wild rose hangs the hip,
 White blooms the gowan on the lea—
 Sae white's the breast, sae red's the lip,
 I'll press beneath the birken tree.

When I saft kisses fondly seek
 To print upon her smiling mou',
 The blush may mantle on her cheek,
 Nae cloud will gather on her brow.
 The silver moon will lend her light
 To see love sparkle in her e'e,
 And as I gaze I'll bless the sight
 In rapture 'neath the birken tree.

As lang as wee birds tune their lay
 Frae 'mang the broom and scented thorn ;
 As lang as dew-drops gem the spray,
 And glitter in the beams of morn ;
 As lang as wimpling burns delight
 To wind in beauty to the sea,
 I'll love the lass wha comes this night
 To meet me 'neath the birken tree.



Song of the Moorland Maid.



BLYTHE Jenny sings of ploughmen chiels
 That whistle o'er the lea,
 And Nannie weeps until she sleeps
 For Willie far at sea ;
 Give Jean the lad that wears the plaid,
 Who trusted is and true,
 Who herds his yowes amang the knowes,
 And clips the tarry woo'.

In winter shrill to view the hill
 He calls his faithful dog,
 And wends his way till close of day
 To ilka burn and bog ;
 In rain and mist, around his breast
 He wraps his lowland plaid,
 And whiles at e'en he cracks with Jean,
 A blythe bit moorland maid.

When April lowers, and chilling showers
Ride on the biting blast,
To shelter'd howes he shifts his yowes
Until the storm be past ;
Early and late their tender state
His thoughts must all employ,
Till sportive lambs beside their dams
His cares repay with joy.

In Summer's pride, both far and wide,
Our herds the stock must gather,
And down the steep, great flocks of sheep,
Come bleating through the heather ;
And featly now the fleece we rowe
That they from Maillie strip,
And Jean she speirs, whose gallant shears
Were best at a' the clip ?

When brown's the bracken on the brae
What handlins then we hail !
Our herds with skill the fat must wale,
And sort the slack for sale ;
The bread and cheese go briskly round,
With dew they weet the lip,
Then til't they fa', keel great and sma',
The dinmont and the tip.

And just, I ween, or Hallowe'en
When we may burn the nit,
And lads and lasses on the floor
To music shake the fit,
Our canny herds, for fear the hail
Some silly yowe may nip,
Have smeared with tar the hirsle a',
Or tried the saving dip.

Let sailors bold, in search of gold,
Cross o'er the raging main,
Let farmers toil from out the soil
To rear the yellow grain ;
Give me the lad that wears the plaid,
Who trusted is and true,
And tents his yowes by height and howes,
And packs the tarry woo'.

My Channelstane.



ALTHOUGH my muse on rustic wing
Ne'er saw Parnassus' witching spring,
She yet together lines can string
In humble strain,
And all thy praises loud to sing,
My channelstane !

Where lone Penkiln, 'mid foam and spray,
O'er many a linn leaps on his way,
A thousand years and mair ye lay
Far out of sight ;
My blessings on the blythesome day
Brought thee to light.

Though ye were slippery as an eel,
Rab fished ye frae the salmon wiel,
And on his back the brawny chiel
Has ta'en ye hame,
Destined to figure at the spiel
And roaring game.

Wi' mony a crack he cloured your crown,
Wi' mony a chap he chipped ye down,
Fu' aft he turned ye roun' and roun',
And aye he sang ;
A' ither stanes ye'll be aboon,
And that ere lang.

Guided by many a mould and line,
He laboured next, with polish fine,
To make your mirrored surface shine
With lustre rare—
Like lake, reflect the forms divine
Of nature fair.

A handle next did Rab prepare,
And fixed it with consummate care—
The wood of ebony so rare,
The screw of steel—
Ye were a channelstane right fair,
Fit for a spiel.

Ye had nae name for icy war—
Nae strange device, nor crest, nor star—
Only a thread of silver spar
 Ran through your blue ;
Ilk curler kenned your flinty scar,
 And running true.

When first Loch Ken ye glided o'er,
I stood upon its eastern shore ;
Your onward course ye truly bore,
 Then struck the land,
Old Lowran echoed back your roar,
 With welcome grand.

Oh, 'twas a glorious sight to view
Ken's frozen waters, firm and true,
Each object clad in silv'ry hue,
 Or grey with time ;
The heavens above, so calm, so blue—
 The hills sublime !

'Twere long to tell where ye have been,
How many gallant games ye've seen ;
How oft the brooms of curlers keen
 Waved o'er your head,
Whene'er ye took the winner clean,
 In time of need.

Nae doubt misfortunes we have met wi',
Right ugly customers been set wi'—
Some honest chieles we are in debt wi'
 To try't again ;
Such accidents maun never fret ye,
 My bonnie stane.

But truth to tell—for truth should still
Be freely told, whether the rill
Speeds on its way or waxeth chill
 At winter's blast—
Though vanquished, we with hearty will
 Fought to the last.

A time will come when I no more
 May fling thee free from shore to shore ;
 With saddened heart I'll hand thee o'er
 To some brave chiel,
 That future times may hear thy roar
 At ilka spiel.

Sev'n heartsome lads—weel may they be—
 Run blythe about their father's knee ;
 To them I'll give right cannily
 This sage advice :
 “Auld Scotland love, and love like me
 Her game of ice.

“Let spiel be lost, or bravely won,
 Enjoy like men the glorious fun ;
 From morning's rise till set of sun
 Be frank and free ;
 And still let manly deeds be done
 Around the tee.”

The following verses, containing special local allusions, formed part of the above poem in its original form.

All hail to thee, romantic Kells !
 Where is the land that thee excels ?
 Thy woods, thy streams, thy bonnie dells
 Are famed in story ;
 Thy Lowe's sweet page of “Mary” tells
 In lines of glory.

And aye since Willie, Kenmure's lord,
 The lads of Kells bade draw the sword
 And fight with Nathan * at the ford,
 By Airds of Ken ;
 They have been deemed at ilka board
 The wale of men.

* The minister of Crossmichael. This famous encounter upon ice was preceded by a witty poetical duel between the two leaders. The correspondence is given by Sir Richard Broun in his “Curliana.”

Oft, too, by Ervie's reedy shore
We've met Partonians by the score,
Enjoyed with them the friendly splore
 Till it was dark ;
Right up the rink ye aye wad roar,
 Nor miss your mark.

From morn till noon, from noon till night,
We've battled with St. Johnstone's knight ;
Mossroddoch's wild-fowl at the sight
 Fled far away,
And safe on Dungeon's serried height
 Heard not the fray.

Yon hardy Mountaineers * have twice
Beat Balmaclellan on the ice,
Without mistake we got a spice
 Of them—the sinners ;
I'll wad a groat they'll no do't thrice,
 We'll yet be winners.

At lone Loch Brack they doubtless dang us,
Yon fell east wind wrought sair to wrang us ;
But certes, lad, if e'er we gang as
 Far off again,
No Morrison nor Craig will whang us,
 My bonnie stane.

Yet can I e'er forget the day,
When Balmaclellan's bold array,
Score upon score, trooped forth to play
 For Murray's horn ? †
Ye saw the spoil, when closed the fray,
 My breast adorn.

The village lads have wondrous skill
A friend to guard, a foe to kill,
A shot to draw, a port to fill,
 They ne'er played ill ;
Give them but whisky, rum, or yill,
 They'll win the medal.

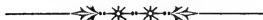
* The curlers of Carsphairn.

† A trophy presented to the Curling Club by the author.

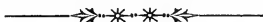
Twa seasons lang we kept it mang us,
 The lads of Urr thought weel to whang us,
 But hame returned with face as lang as
 Joseph's ell-wand ;
 And sic a sang as Murdoch sang us—
 Some say, he banned !



Wi' a' the Keys Awa'.



This parody was suggested by the dilemma of a brother minister, who, on returning to his hospitable manse with a friend from a distance, found his wife from home, and the power of the keys with her.



AND are ye sure the news is true?
 And is my wife awa' ?
 Wi' a the keys about the house,
 Nor left a drap awa ?
 Oh, gie me down black "Jeroboam,"
 And let his head down fa' ;
 As toom's a whistle Jerry is,
 And winna drap awa.

For there's nae luck about the house,
 There's nae luck awa ;
 There's little pleasure in the house
 When our guidwife's awa'.

A trusty friend came in at e'en
 To spend an hour or twa,
 That luckless day when we came hame
 To find our wife awa' !
 Twa gude fat hens are in the press,
 A greybeard down the stair,
 But nane o' them can Colin get
 On which they weel may fare.

I wish my wife wad mind her man,
And sing beside her wheel;
I'm getting dowie 'bout the heart,
In troth I'm far frae weel.
And what puts greeting in my head?
The keys are far awa'!
Twa decent chiels can naething get
To drink in strong or sma'.

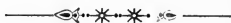
Had we the keys, we'd be content,
And hae nae mair to crave,
Right happy wad we be at e'en,
And blythe aboon the lave;
We'd toast the Queen (lang may she live
To rule by sea and lan'),
The Kirk, the State, and ilka wife
That's gude to her gudeman.

But, hark, there's music in that fit,
I think I hear her there!
'Twas but the breeze, or Rollo's* step
Gaun hirplin' down the stair.
When shall I see her face again?
When shall I hear her speak?
I'm getting weaker 'bout the heart,
In troth I'm like to greet!

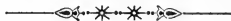
Oh, hunger it is ill to bide,
And drouth is waur than a'!
So wae betide the man at e'en
Whase wife is far awa'.
Go, reckon up the ills o' life,
Go, count them great and sma'—
The greatest is a wife frae hame,
Wi' a' the keys awa'!
For there's nae luck, &c.

* The name of the dog.

Wandering Willie.



The following playful lines were composed upon a brother member of Presbytery, who received leave of absence and went to the West Indies, a bachelor in bad health, but returned recruited, with a winsome wife.



WITH oily speech dear Dr. Shand
On Willie laid his high command
To seek afar some sunny land,
Some island palmy—
His mind and body both demand
A climate balmy.

He sang, Fareweel the land of Sawners,
Fareweel to Borgue and dear Kirkauners,
Fareweel the sound of flail and fanners,
Bullock and bee ;
To distant lands your Willie wanders,
Far ower the sea.

Bengairn and Screel, of sombre hue,
And Solway's shore, recede from view,
And o'er the wave so darkly blue
The vessel glides,
And soon in scenes, both fair and new,
At anchor rides.

Time rolled away—and Willie there
To Borgue bequeathed his longest prayer ;
He grasped a quill with godly care
And wrote a letter,
And Betty, from the pulpit stair,
Said, "Willie's better."

Still doubt hung o'er his distant doom,
All said he'd fill an early tomb ;
In Borgue's big breast there was no room
For hope to shine in,
In hut and ha' was nought but gloom
And sad repining.

Ah, beauteous flower, too early faded !
Ah, hopeful morn, too early shaded !
Too soon, alas, to dust degraded
 Is Willie Reid ;
The man whom Borgue so greatly needed
 Is gone indeed.

While thus the flock dissolves with pity,
And Willie's far from Borgue and duty,
Come go with me, if it doth suit ye,
 To yonder grove ;
Two lovers in that isle of beauty
 Talk much of love.

Beneath a spreading banyan tree,
In beauty's bloom, a maid I see,
She's seated on her lover's knee
 (Don't deem it silly)—
That lover fond, I tell to thee,
 Is honest Willie.

“ As lang as Jews delight in money,
And bees of Borgue store best of honey,
And bullocks thrive on clover bonnie
 And flowery mead,
I'll love till death my winsome Annie,”
 Sang Willie Reid.

“ Let us but tread Kirkauner's jetty,
Adieu, say I, to Burney's Betty,
In Manse of Borgue a queen I'll set ye,
 To rule the house ;
So, honest Andrew, never fret ye,
 Gae back to Luce.”

Jamaica's clime soon reds the berry,
And ripe and red was that bright cherry,
So in the month of May so merry
 He found a bride ;
Then o'er the foam fleet flew the wherry
 To Solway's tide.

Now, lads of Borgue, if ill ye be,
 I'll tell to you the remedy—
 Go briskly woo the maids of Dée,
 Like men undaunted ;
 Like Willie wed—for don't you see,
 A wife he wanted.



The Wee Widow: Or the Jilter Filted.



This seems to have been founded on some actual incident. Although placed last, it will be thought by many not the least admirable in the book. The images may appear occasionally unrefined ; but they are completely faithful to the ideas of humble life.



A WINSOME lass ca'd bonnie Jean,
 Was woo'd and won at blythe nineteen,
 Yet scarcely had a wifie been
 For twa 'r three year
 Before the grass was waving green
 O'er Johnnie dear.

He took a cauld, then dwined awa'
 Just as the leaf began to fa',
 And left behind some bairnies twa
 Wi' their poor mother ;
 Her grief was great the neighbours saw,
 And ill to smother.

Some folks there are no worth a snuff
 To tread life's path sae rude and rough ;
 If ance they fa' or get a scuff,
 They're nae mair brave,
 They lazy limp, or feckless puff
 On to the grave.

But Jeanie was a bauld wee wife,
Wi' poortith waged successfu' strife,
And led a calm industrious life
 From day to day,
And in a shop wi' groceries rife
 Was blythe as May.

Her weel-thatched cot was snug tho' sma',
Its wa's sae white were white as snaw,
And then her yaird wi' flowers was braw,
 Red, white, and blue,
Hersel' the fairest flower o' a'
 That met the view.

Here had she lived and happy been,
And mony canty days had seen,
Hadna the lads wi' pawky een,
 And greedy glow'r,
Waked in the breast o' bonnie Jean
 Love's gentle power.

The first that cam', the country ken'd him
A weaver lad—his father sent him
To try his luck, and kindly lent him
 His buckskin breeks,
But being frail he wisely ment them
 Wi' twa 'r three steeks.

Red as the rowan was his hair,
And combed and cut wi' muckle care ;
For whiskers, a right flashy pair
 Adorned his cheek ;
Few could withstand his winning air
 And voice sae meek.

At first the lad was unco' blate,
And scarcely dared to look her gate,
But soon the counter was his seat
 Beside the till ;
There views o' marriage he would state
 Wi' muckle skill.

For thee I'll eydent ply the treadle,
Or delve the yaird wi' ony beadle,
Wi' canny care I'se rock the cradle,
And nurse the wean,
And e'en and morn I'll daut and cuddle
My bonnie Jean.

If ye're frae hame or feckless be,
I'll wisely sell the pounds o' tea
That come frae China yont the sea,
A' shall gae right
When I the gear wi' tenty e'e
Keep weel in sight.

It's now a decent time sinsyne
Your dearest Johnnie ye did tine,
It's really wrang ower lang to pine
For him that's gane;
Sae just consent that ye'll be mine,
And ease my pain.

Thus did he court wi' might and main
The winsome widow's hand to gain,
Nor did he weave his wab in vain—
Consent was given;
He kissed and clapped her and was fain,
And thocht it heaven!

They there and then arranged it a'
To be proclaimed some Sundays twa,
Syne on the minister to ca'
And fix the night—
When with a bridal blythe and braw
He'd bind them tight.

But oh! there's much 'tween cup and lip,
And folks wha wad o' wedlock sip
Maun sometimes dree a dreadfu' nip;
The weaver lad
In nearest dam may tak' a dip,
Or gang wud mad.

There's ane ca'd Jock, a strappin' chiel,
Wha baith could dance and fiddle weel,
And aft had gart the lasses squeal
 In barn and byre—
He too has sworn her heart to steal,
 Or else expire.

The news he heard wi' brow o' care,
Took to the woods in black despair,
Grat till his een were red and sair,
 And (waefu' man)
He tore his locks of raven hair
 Aye as he ran.

This hurricane of passion past,
For grief that's great can never last,
He in his heaving bosom cast
 Upon a plan—
To nail unto the counter fast
 The favoured man.

To her wee cot beside the way
He saftly stole at gloamin' grey,
And mony tender things did say
 To her that e'en ;
By turns was amorous, grave, and gay
 To wanton Jean.

He knew each fond enticing art
To win a female's fickle heart,
And played so well the lover's part
 That lang ere day
He stole (nay, reader, do not start)
 Her heart away.

As bursts the cloud wi' thunder dread,
So fell the news on Geordie's head,
He couldna speak, but gaed to bed
 A waefu' man ;
A while the neebors thocht him dead,
 He was sae wan.

As sense returned, he wildly tore
His ruddy locks, and fiercely swore
He'd never tramp the treadle more,
 But burn, burn, burn—
Then 'list, gang to a foreign shore,
 And ne'er return.

When Johnnie saw the coast was clear,
He first felt fain, then unco queer,
Began to loup, and brange, and rear,
 And then to falter ;
Reested at last, and wadna steer
 To Hymen's altar.

Marriage, they say's, a dreadful shore,
Girt round wi' heughs and mountains hoar,
Where angry winds with billows roar ;
 There hands uncivil
Poor mortals pinch at every pore,
 Leagued with the devil.

On that stern shore are eyes of flame,
And hearts that know not, feel not shame,
And Amazons nae man can tame,
 Nae kindness saften ;
The slut, the scold, the sullen dame
 Are there ower aften.

Oddsfish ! I dinna like this wark,
The very thocht o't drives me stark,
My happiness I'll not embark
 In ship sae crazy ;
Wise folk will tell ye, " In the dark
 To loup be lazy."

So ends my tale. And now, ye fair,
Tak' tent unto a bardie's prayer—
One only sweetheart keep wi' care,
 Or, lass sae bonnie,
Ye'll greet, like Jean, for Geordie sair,
 And eke for Johnnie.







